

Appl No. 10/584980
Reply to Action dated 11/27/2007
Page 4

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REMARKS

Claims 1 and 2 have been amended. Revised claim 1 is supported by, for example, lines 4-10 of page 13, line 17 of page 15 to line 24 of page 17 and Figs. 1, 4, and 6-10 in the Specification. Revised claim 2 is supported by, for example, lines 13-18 of page 16, lines 16-19 of page 17, line 27 of page 13 to line 3 of page 14, and Figs. 7-10 in the Specification. There is no new matter.

Applicant respectfully request favorable reconsideration and reexamination of this application.

In the Specification

The disclosure was objected to because page 14, lines 10-12 refers to the claims. Applicants respectfully traverse this objection. Lines 8-12 of page 14 states that certain elements of the embodiment "corresponds to the switching mechanism set forth in claims 1 and 2." Accordingly, this disclosure merely confirms the correspondence between the disclosed and claimed elements and does not rely on the claims themselves as a part of the disclosure. Applicants respectfully request a favorable reconsideration.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Ishimaru et al. (US 5018346). The rejection stated that Ishimaru discloses all of the required features of claims 1-4. Applicants do not concede the correctness of the rejection.

Regarding claim 1, the rejection stated that Ishimaru et al. teaches a handle 33 in Fig. 7 that corresponds to the claimed manual operation member. Applicants respectfully disagree. Even if the handle corresponds to the claimed manual operation member as stated in the rejection, which Applicants do not concede, the handle 33 is pivotally secured to the lower gate-shaped frame 26 of the upper cover having a pivot axis near spring 34 (see Figs. 1 and 4-7). As shown in Fig. 6 of Ishimaru et al., the handle pivots about an axis that moves to open the upper cover region. Accordingly, the handle as taught in Ishimaru et al. has a pivot axis that is substantially movable as the human operator operates the handle. In contrast, claim 1 requires a manual operation member pivotable about a stationary axis arranged at the traveling body.

Appl No. 10/584980
Reply to Action dated 11/27/2007
Page 5

Further, the rejection stated that Ishimaru et al. teaches a connector 32 that corresponds to the claimed interlock mechanism and that the pivotal pins 23 correspond to the claimed switching mechanism. Applicants respectfully disagree.

In Fig. 9 of Ishimaru et al. it is clearly shown that connector 32 is a U-shaped element that is a part of a grass containing unit 29. In Fig. 9 it is also clearly shown that pivotal pin 23 is not a part of the connector 32. It is also clearly shown in Fig. 9 that pivotal pin 23 is connected to supporting arm 22. The pivotal pin is not even an element of the grass containing unit and has no direct association to the connector. Thus, Ishimaru et al. teaches that the connector and pivotal pin are separate elements. In contrast, claim 1 requires that an interlock mechanism includes a switching mechanism. Accordingly, claim 1 requires that a switching mechanism is a part of an interlock mechanism, such as, for example as illustrated in Figs. 5-6 in the Specification, which shows an embodiment of an interlock mechanism 44 including an embodiment of a switching mechanism 50.

Further, Ishimaru et al. does not teach that pivotal pin can increase or decrease a turning angle of the grass containing unit depending on the amount of grass in the grass containing unit. In fact, Ishimaru et al. suggests that there is some advantage to the workings of the pivotal pin that does not depend on the amount of grass contained in the grass containing units (see column 6, lines 1-4, wherein it is stated that when the pivotal pins are movably engaged, the pivotal fulcras are not deviated by means of the weight of the mowed grass containing unit 29). In contrast, claim 1 requires that the switching mechanism increases a turning angle of the grass collection box per unit operation angle of the manual operation member about the axis when the grass collection box is empty or substantially empty and that reduces the turning angle when the grass collection box contains much grass. Claim 1 requires a feature that Ishimaru et al. clearly does not teach or suggest.

For at least the above reasons, Ishimaru et al. does not disclose all of the required features of claim 1. Therefore Ishimaru et al. does not anticipate claim 1. Claim 1 is patentable over Ishimaru et al. Claims 2-4 are also patentable over Ishimaru et al. for at least the same reasons as claim 1 from which they depend. Applicants respectfully request a favorable reexamination and reconsideration of the claims.

Appl No. 10/584980
Reply to Action dated 11/27/2007
Page 6

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned attorney-of-record, Douglas P. Mueller (Reg. No. 30,3000), at (612) 455-3804.



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Respectfully submitted,

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